

OBITUARY.

The Council regret that they have to record the loss by death of the following Fellows and Associates during the past year:—

Fellows :—Wentworth Erck.
General Edward Frome.
W. J. Ibbetson.
Harry Taylor.
Rev. Alfred Weld.

Associates :—C. H. F. Peters.
O. A. Rosenberger.
Herman Schultz.

WENTWORTH ERCK was born in Dublin in 1827, and was the eldest son of John Caillard Erck, of Huguenot descent, an Ecclesiastical Commissioner for Ireland. His prænomen he derived by right of his grandmother, Elizabeth Wentworth, niece of Sir John Wentworth, baronet, Lieut.-Governor of Nova Scotia in 1808. Educated in part at Rugby, he graduated at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1850, and was in the same year called to the Irish Bar. In 1859 he took the degree of LL.D. Chemistry and mechanics had been the pastimes of his boyhood, and while still a youth he developed the predilection for astronomy which distinguished him through life. On his marriage, the better to discharge his duties to his tenantry he chose for his residence "Sherrington," not far from his landed property in the county Wicklow. He there erected an observatory, of which, and of his investigations, the following account has been kindly supplied by Mr. Arthur A. Rambaut, Assistant-Astronomer at Dunsink:—

"Dr. Erck's observatory, as well as a great many details in the construction of his instruments, was designed by himself to suit his special requirements. The object-glass of his equatoreal was a $7\frac{1}{2}$ -inch, by Alvan Clark, which had formerly belonged to the late Mr. Dawes, and with which much of the earlier work of that distinguished observer had been accomplished. It is in

some respects a remarkable glass, being so full of bubbles that to one versed in such matters it might have appeared almost worthless for the delicate purpose for which it was intended; whereas it is remarkable for the exquisite definition it is capable of affording, as was proved on more than one occasion by the work done with it in the hands of Mr. Dawes and Dr. Erck.

“Within the last few years he obtained an important addition to his instrumental equipment in a fine silver-on-glass reflector of 15 inches aperture, for which he designed an alt-azimuth mounting, completed a little before his death.

“From the commencement of his career as an observer he paid especial attention to the appearance of the Sun’s disc, and has left a record of the appearance of its surface on a large number of days in each year from 1869 up till 1888. In the earlier years of this period he contented himself with a general description of the appearance and position of the spots and faculæ from day to day, with occasionally a pen-and-ink sketch of the more remarkable forms. About the middle of this period, however, he had a reticule of glass, with small squares ruled on it, inserted in the focus of his telescope, with which he was enabled to determine the positions of the markings with sufficient accuracy for the purpose of identification.

“He spent a portion of nearly every year in London, and in order to continue unbroken his series of solar observations, he was in the habit of taking with him a small telescope of $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches aperture, with which he was enabled, by means of a portable equatoreal mounting, described by him in the pages of the *Monthly Notices*, to carry on his solar work.

“But although his observations of the Sun occupied a large part of his attention, they by no means exhausted it. He took a keen interest in almost all branches of observational astronomy. His most sustained labours, next to the series of his solar observations, were devoted to some double stars which were known or suspected to constitute binary systems. In this connection he devoted himself entirely to measuring position angles, leaving the determination of distance to those possessing telescopes of larger aperture. His attention was principally directed to some forty selected binaries, of which he obtained more than 1,900 measurements between the years 1873 and 1880, during which period he seems to have been most active as an observer.

“From time to time, as they appeared, Dr. Erck observed and recorded the appearance of the brighter comets, and was in the habit of sending occasional notices of such events to the local papers, as well as to the scientific periodicals.

“He paid a good deal of attention to the faint comites of some of the brighter stars, such as *Sirius*, *Procyon*, and *Rigel*; and at the opposition of *Mars* in 1877 he distinguished himself as one of the very few observers in this country who were able to pick up the satellites of that planet, which had been lately discovered by Professor Asaph Hall with the great 26-inch

achromatic at Washington—a remarkable feat for so small a telescope, and one requiring a keen-sighted observer at the eye-end.

“Among other phenomena which engaged the attention of Dr. Erck was the appearance of *Jupiter's* surface in the year 1880, at which time the red spot was very conspicuous. He appears to have been one of the first, if not the very first, to notice the proper motion of this spot with regard to the general surface of the planet. The appearance of *Saturn's* rings and the comparative brightness of his satellites also engaged a good deal of his attention from time to time, although he does not appear to have published the results of these observations. Indeed, his published works bear a very small proportion to the extent of his labours, and, to judge exclusively by this standard, one would form a most inadequate estimate of his astronomical activity. Those who have known him, however, will not lightly forget his zeal and enthusiasm, and the interest he took in all questions touching his favourite science, or the hearty manner and ready hospitality which made a visit to the Sherrington Observatory so memorable and agreeable.”

Dr. Wentworth Erck contributed several papers to the *Monthly Notices* on observational astronomy and instrumental appliances.

Dr. Erck's devotion to science was not allowed to interfere with the discharge of his duties as a Poor-Law guardian, a magistrate, and a country gentleman. He was at one time invited to stand for Parliament in the Conservative interest, but declined. That the energy he displayed in his public duties used up his capital of health and shortened his life there can be little doubt; but his appetite for work was keen and his spirit indomitable, and he always expressed the desire, which was granted him, to “die in harness.” His unfailing good temper, his child-like heart, his simplicity of character, and his perfect contentment attracted to him a wide feeling of respect.

His death took place at his residence on January 15 of the past year.

He was elected a Fellow of this Society March 9, 1855.

EDWARD CHARLES FROME was born at Gibraltar on January 7, 1802. He was the son of the Rev. J. T. Frome, a member of a well-known Dorsetshire family. He was educated first at a school at Bexley, afterwards at a school at Blackheath, where he was a schoolfellow of Benjamin Disraeli. In his fifteenth year he entered the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, where he studied engineering under Olinthus Gregory and Peter Barlow, and attended the science lectures of Faraday. He distinguished himself in all his examinations, and passed out for his commission at the head of his batch. There were at that time no vacancies in the Royal Engineers, and it was not